

REMARKS

Claims 2-6, 9 and 10 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 7, 8 and 11 have been cancelled and claims 2, 3 and 9 have been amended. Reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the pending application in view of the following remarks are respectfully requested.

As an initial matter, Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 2-6 and 11 include allowable subject matter.

Applicant also thanks the Examiner for considering all of the documents cited in the Information Disclosure Statement filed on May 11, 2004.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Lukehart (U.S. Patent No. 4,867,032) in view of Atkin (U.S. Patent No. 6,797,871). In order to advance the application to issue, Applicant has canceled claims 1, 7 and 8. However, Applicant's cancellation of the claims should not be viewed as a concession of the propriety of the rejection. Further, Applicant reserves the right to submit similar type claims in another application.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 9 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Newman (U.S. Patent No. 5,837,913). Applicant traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

Applicant has incorporated the subject matter of dependent claim 11 into independent claim 9 (and thus, cancels claim 11); that is, claim 9 recites that an end portion of the belt body includes a plurality of slits configured to engage the hook. In the Office Action, the Examiner acknowledged that the prior art does not include this feature.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 9 is in condition for allowance, and respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection and allow the claim.

Dependent claim 10 is also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth with respect to independent claim 9.

In the Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 2-6 and 11 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that they would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants have rewritten claims 2 and 3 into independent form, and, as noted above, have cancelled claim 11 (incorporating its features into claim 9). Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the objection and allow these claims.

Dependent claims 4-6 are submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons as independent claims 2 and 3.

Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

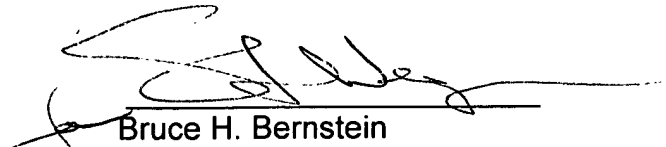
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate. Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present invention in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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